

Ethnocentrism and its effects on third world countries

[Economics](#), [Globalization](#)



Ethnocentrism and its Effects on Third World Nations Western civilization has always believed that their way of life is correct and any opposing way of life is uncivilized. They put themselves on top of a pedestal to promote their self-proclaimed superiority to all other cultures. This ethnocentric way of thinking has led to the abuse of third world peoples such as Indians and African Americans. For example, in India, Indian culture is being taken away from them while western culture is being forced in. This kind of cultural abuse does not only occur in Asia but also in the United States. Slavery has ended, but some still refuse to release their racist ideas and African Americans are left unprotected to be physically and emotionally scared. Although western culture is supposedly advanced and more developed some people still behave in a manner which civilized culture should not. Luckily some of these victims have found ways to relieve themselves from the past pain through the practice of Buddhism. Although western culture has consistently tried to establish its own ideals within India, the natives are trying to resist them and keep their own culture. It is their culture that sets them apart from other nations in the world. Removing what makes them Indians is only washing away a civilization rather than improving on it. China came into India under false pretenses; they claimed that they were there to help people and liberate them. In the foreword to *The Dance of the Siva* author, Romain Rolland, speaks his viewpoint on the imperialistic ways of western society. Because "the average European cannot see beyond the boundaries of his own individual life" (1985, xv), the Chinese saw their invasion of India as liberation of the people. But the Indians saw it for exactly what it was, an invasion. Liberators do not burn down villages and viciously rape women.

Since the Chinese did not agree with the Indians practice Buddhism because they believed it made them weak so they wanted to remove all signs of Buddhism from India. However, by taking away their freedom to practice Buddhism, the Chinese were not creating a solution, but rather introducing a problem, because when the Indians lose Buddhism, they lose their culture and their sense of self. Nevertheless, this is how ignorance powered by ethnocentrism can destroy lives. Because the Chinese do not fully understand the concept of Buddhism, they immediately pass it off as meaningless meditation. But if the Chinese took the time to understand the true essence of Buddhism, they would see that it "embraces vast stretches of time, cycles of human ages, whose successive lives gravitate in concentric circles, and travel ever so slowly towards the centre, the Place of Deliverance" (Rolland, 1985, xv). A better understanding would help them to slowly remove their veil of ignorance so they could realize Buddhism is a way of live and not a religion. Not only have Indians suffered under the hands of oppression, African Americans have also dealt with their own strife. It all began with slavery; once black people were enslaved their chances of ever leading normal lives were disintegrated. However, as time went on, African Americans were set free and were able to roam the streets freely as free people. Although they were legally free, social freedom had not yet occurred. They were still seen as inhuman creatures that should not be mixed in with society. So they were still persecuted and treated as if they were never released. Alice Walker is a writer and civil rights activist who also disagrees with the treatments of Blacks after slavery. In one of her writings she opens up with an account that captures the true essence of the cruelty Blacks

endured during post-slavery times, she states, " the horse was drinking his blood? His own father was one of the assassins? His crime was that the horse was too " fine"? "(2004, 190). The boy she speaks of was killed by his own white father; it shows how strong his father racial hatred was. The father did not even take into consideration that the black boy was his own son. Instead, he participated in the brutal murdering of his child. The point of abuse such as this was to dehumanize the blacks and condition them into thinking that this kind of treatment was acceptable. The logic behind this idea is that if no one knew what good treatment was, then they could never complain about their harsh treatment. Walker compares the abuse that the blacks endured to a person being shot with an arrow, she says, " Suppose some one shot you with an arrow, right in the heart. Would you spend your time screaming at the archer or even trying to locate him? Or would you try to pull the arrow out of your heart? " (2004, 197). The arrow symbolizes racism and the archer is the white man who shoots down black people with it. Racism is the weapon that does not just hurt physically but also emotionally. The slaves who took the physical pain have the visible scars while their descendents of today carry the emotional scars passed down by their ancestors. The archer, knowing all of this information still shoots continuously and does not care about the pain that he inflicts on his targets because it gives him some sort of sick pleasure to see them suffer. However, the archer has no idea of the kind of damage he has created. He just continues shoot at his dehumanized targets without a second thought. He has complete knowledge of the pain he inflicts on his targets he just refuses to accept responsibility for his actions. Jan Willis also contributes her views to Dharma, Color, and Culture with her

piece " Dharma Has No Color". Willis' views are very similar to Walker's; they both speak upon Western civilizations, mainly whites, abuse of Americans. They both believe that " we people of color had a sort of head start given the prominence of Buddhism's discussion of suffering. " (2004. 217). Western culture, through their ideals of superiority, causes the suffering that makes these people turn to Buddhism to escape. They suffer from the " historical traumas of slavery, colonization, and segregation, understanding suffering in a way that our white brothers and sisters do not ..." (Willis, 2004, 220). During times of slavery, " civilized man" tortured Africans and according to Willis Africans of today still suffer from the pain of our ancestors with the unseen emotional scars that we all carry within. Though western ideas have ruined lives of those in the past and caused pain for those here in the present, who sympathize strongly, Buddhist beliefs can help too, " transform negative emotions and perceptions into more positive ones. " (Willis, 2004, 221). Although western society has emotionally altered many people's lives throughout their quest for international change, the pain does not have to remain. Buddhism has created ways for people to escape their suffering so that they can move on with their life and reach inner peace. Only by finding peace within themselves can those maltreated people attempt to live emotionally healthy lives. Had the Dalai Lama's ideas been implemented into these two societies, much of the unnecessary suffering and abuse would not have occurred. Because one of the important beliefs is in nonviolence, slavery would not have ever come about. Many years of injustice would have never taken place because the " Western world, abandoning itself utterly to its search of individual and social happiness,

maims and disfigures life by the very frenzy of its haste, and kills in the shell of happiness which it pursues". (Rolland, 1985, xv). The west spends so much of its time searching for happiness that in attaining their wants they destroy the happiness of others. Especially through the way they "liberate" civilizations. Because western culture finds itself superior to others it feels as if they always know what is best for others. Instead of abusing these civilizations and erasing away the marks they have made on this earth, they should embrace the differences and try to mix cultures in order to make improvements. Relations between china and India have not always been negative. In fact, during the seventh century, Buddhism actually "bridged gaps" between India and china rather than separating them, as it does today. The causes of these good relations were centered around three figures: Xuanzang, the Chinese monk, Emperor Taizang and the Chinese ambassador to India, Wang Xuance. Xuanzang was a famous Buddhist pilgrim because he set the foundation for communication between the Tang and the Kingdom of Kanauj. In 627, he left on his nineteen-year pilgrimage in which he was given appointments with numerous political figures, kings. He succeeded in getting some of the Tainzong's attention towards South Asia and he also got Harsha to "open diplomatic channels with China" (Sen, 2001, 5). While Xuanzang's motives were purely for the means of the people and the religion, Emperor Taizong's motives were not as pure. Towards the end of his life he began to search things that could give him longevity. He maintains relations with India while in search of drugs to lengthen his life spiritual healing. Wang Xuance, the Chinese ambassador, was a lay Buddhist, which was good for the purposes of helping India because all of his judgments are

now made through the eyes of the people. There were Chinese figures that did care about made through the eyes of the people. There were Chinese figures that did care about the preservation of India and they advocated on their behalf whether it was for a hidden incentives or if there were no incentives at all. This is calming information to know that the ancestors of the Indian and Chinese civilizations found a way to live together on peace and unity but sadly, they can not do that today. The Chinese and Indian seventh-century civilizations royalty connected and found ways to build bridges instead of forcing change they allowed mixes. If these ethnocentric ways of thinking continue, all diversity in the world will vanish. Instead of embracing cultures and actually helping the countries these " liberators" choose to kill diversity. Western powers want everyone to think, act and live like them because in the end their overall goal is not to help others but in fact to make other like themselves. If the world continues to function in this manner we will no longer have numerous cultures and instead we will all be one people in a very boring world. They want to forcefully spread their culture instead of allowing the people to exercise their freedom of speech and God given right to free thought.